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Vicar's Cross at Course Closures

Since becoming the Chairman of Course Management, at my club, I have read with interest a number of articles in "Greenkeeper International." While I appreciate that the magazine is directed at greenkeepers, I feel that there are some issues which relate to the wider internal politics of clubs, which could be of interest to your non greenkeeping readers.

One of my major headaches is the need to apply restrictions during the winter period in order to protect the course. Our course has a clay based sub-soil and the heavy rainfall which we have experienced over recent years has created great difficulties for us. Despite on-going drainage programmes over the last 35 years, there are still numerous occasions when it is necessary to close the course.

With these circumstances prevailing we have an annual policy for the pro-

tection of the course, mainly during the period December to February, although the actual period is dependent on the general playing conditions. This is done through the use of preferred lies or small synthetic mats for general play, a few winter tee mats and some restrictions on the use of trolleys and buggies.

Members are always made aware of these restrictions and the majority are both understanding and co-operative in complying with them. However, there is always an underlying feeling amongst a minority that somehow we are different from other clubs and that elsewhere members enjoy unrestricted golf all the year round! I know that this is not true but it would be extremely helpful if evidence was available to show this. Particularly useful would be information regarding the total banning of both pull

and electric trolleys during the winter period as this issue is by far the most controversial.

For this reason I am writing to ask you whether, through your magazine, it might be possible to carry out a survey of clubs in order to determine nationally, how clubs deal with this problem. We all tend to cope on an individual basis and therefore, in isolation. Mutual support and co-operation in providing this information would, I am sure, make this annual headache easier to manage.

John Baird, Chairman of Course Management, Vicars Cross Golf Club

Editor's Note

Anyone with information which may assist John should contact him at Vicar's Cross or utilise our Letters' Page to pass on any useful information

Check out this month's Talking Heads feature on page 64, where six of the country's top men explain how their courses cope with closure

Are we really Committed to Green?

I write as a greenkeeper, with strong environmental views. I am a keen promoter of environmental awareness and the sustainable and appropriate care of all our golf courses.

I am currently working as an assistant greenkeeper at Woodbury Park in Devon, where for the last six months we have begun several initiatives aimed at promoting and conserving various areas of natural habitat on and around the golf course.

Consequently, it was with great regret that I read your article on the 'Committed to Green' campaign (Jan 2000 issue).

How sad that as an industry we should fight so hard and for so long to break down what can be best described as archaic and unnecessary communication barriers within many of our golf clubs, only to see that the very organisations that are supposedly 'guiding' our industry towards a greener and more 'responsible' future cannot organise themselves to reach a full and fair agreement with regard to the future environmental management of our golf courses!

As an organisation, BIGGA has to be praised for the numerous campaigns and

initiatives it has launched and supported to improve environmental awareness. Not least the growing success of the BIGGA Environmental Awards, which for the last five years have served to illustrate just how committed as a profession greenkeeping is in working within sustainable and environmentally sound parameters. It seems so often that the many large committees and advisory bodies become alienated from those individuals who work tirelessly on a day-to-day basis to achieve more than can seemingly be gained after days of discussion and hot air!

All too often the best efforts of the enthusiasts are scuppered through both a lack of support and information on how best to set about a course of management. From its launch in 1997, the Committed to Green initiative appeared to be a very positive and worthwhile programme for the future but any initiative, no matter how promising is destined to fail without sufficient encouragement and support for those who are expected to carry out such guidelines at a grass roots level!

If the truth be known, there are in fact hundreds of individuals within our industry who are willing to become involved

in the longterm improvement of golf's image as regards the environment.

However if these voices are left unheard for much longer, both their enthusiasm and patience will run out. Let's face it, without the contribution and co-operation of greenkeepers, nothing will ever be achieved.

It is of utmost importance that all grievances be ironed out, everyone be consulted and that the industry as a whole can move towards a stable and sustainable future. We all have an opinion and a voice and we all deserve to be heard. The question must be asked: How will our industry ever improve its image if those who can make a difference, neglect to communicate or acknowledge those who are already working at a grass roots level to achieve what must be the common goal for all greenkeepers and individuals working within our industry? For any scheme to be successful it must have the full and comprehensive support of everyone involved within the industry.

A new decade, a new millennium, still the same age old problems!

William Bowden, Exmouth, Devon

Green issues from across the pond

As an outsider from the United States, and reading Greenkeeper International magazine over the last two issues, I would like to comment on how the Committed to Green issue appears from this side of the pond... in my view.

Beginning with Neil Thomas and Gordon Child's articles in the January issue I could feel their concern for the way the Valderrama Declaration with the Committed to Green Foundation went. This month I have read all the letters and the interview with David Stubbs titled "Green Issues".

Number One I get a bad feeling about David Stubbs' attitude and when I read comments like "Neil Thomas and Gordon Child gave a very distorted picture of the Committed to Green Programme" and his comments on American bias - "They were inaccurate and offensive". His comments point to a lack of communication skill somewhere along the road he took.

Secondly, I personally agree with Neil and Gordon on the fact of greenkeepers being on the ground floor. Every Superintendent (greenkeeper) here in the States that I know (including myself) has made the initial contact and sold the Audubon program to their clubs, not one I know of has been directed by a club official to do so. To start at the top with a trickle down effect to the person who is doing the work, and is truly concerned about the environment they work in and love so much, is putting the cart before the horse.

In my opinion as a greenkeeper, to have a club official shove something at you that you in your own way have already been silently working on for years without recognition, is the wrong approach.

Remember Mr Stubbs, Green starts at the ground and grows up not down.

WP Montague MG, Ohio, US via email



Flashback to January's issue

Old machines: Truly a cut above the rest

The January Issue story of the Rhos on Sea Golf Club's Ransomes Overgreen Mower was very interesting for me as I have five of these machines collected over the last few years, one of which is the same age as Aneurin Hughes's machine. My unit has a SISIS aerator fitted and came from the Old Course on the common at Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, being in use up to five years ago. I also have about 30 other old mowing machines some over 100 years old.

Peter Hampton, Bernhard & Co, Territory Manager, Western USA